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ON THE WATERFRONT:
AN ORAL HISTORY OF RICHMOND, CALIFORNIA

Henry O'Hara

A VIEW OF THE WATERFRONT FROM POINT RICHMOND

An Interview Conducted by
Judith K. Dunning
in 1985

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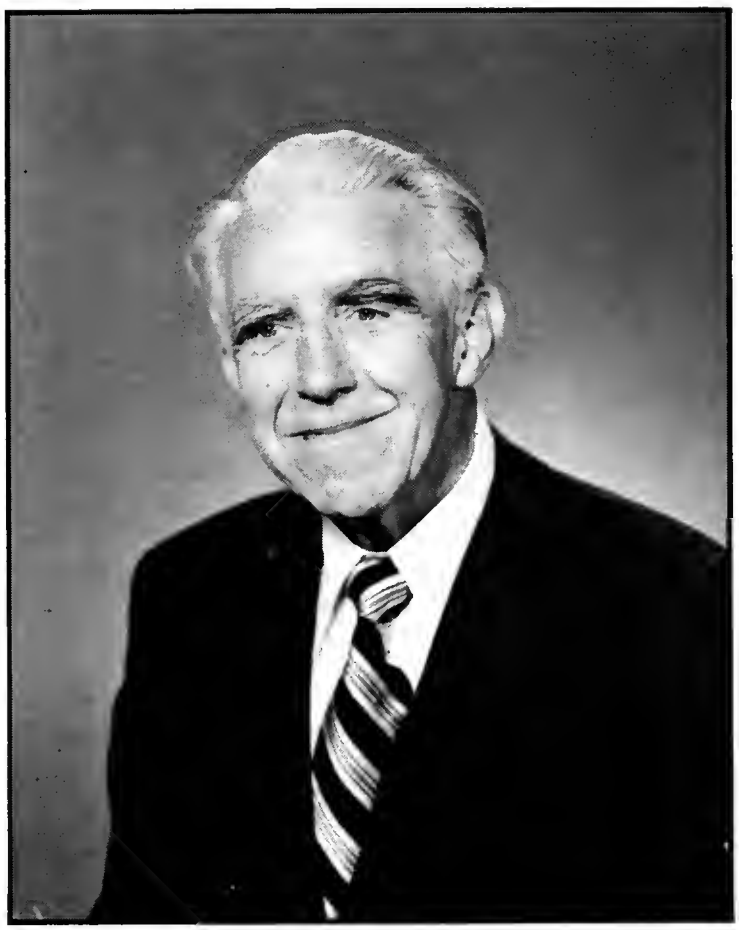

Henry O'Hara. Photograph taken at his retirement from Chevron Shipping in 1976.

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PREFACE

ORIGIN OF THE PROJECT

"On the Waterfront: An Oral History of Richmond, California," began in 1985. Interviews were conducted with twenty-six Bay Area residents including early Richmond families, World War II Kaiser Shipyard workers, cannery workers, fishermen, and whalers.

I was first attracted to this shoreline industrial town located sixteen miles northeast of San Francisco in 1982 while enrolled in a documentary photography class. For ten weeks I concentrated on the Richmond waterfront, often accompanying the crew of the freighter Komoku on its nightly run from Richmond to C & H Sugar in Crockett. It was then that I began to hear colorful stories of Richmond's waterfront and the City's World War II days.

The question which captivated me in 1982 and still does is--what happened to Richmond when World War II transformed this quiet working class town into a 24-hour-day industrial giant? With the entry of the Kaiser Shipyard, the number of employed industrial workers skyrocketed from 4,000 to 100,000. An unprecedented number of women entered the work force. The shipyards set speed and production records producing one-fifth of the nation's Liberty ships. By 1945 Richmond's shipyards had launched 727 ships.

There were other enormous changes. During the wartime boom, Richmond's population rose from 23,000 to 125,000. The ethnic composition of Richmond and the entire Bay Area changed dramatically with the influx of workers recruited from the South and Midwest. There was little time to provide the needed schools and community services. Housing shortages were critical. Twenty-four thousand units of war housing were built but they were soon filled to capacity. People were living in make-shift trailer camps along the roadsides and the all-night movie theaters were filled with sleeping shipyard workers.

James Leiby, professor of Social Welfare at UC Berkeley, called Richmond a "spectacular" case of urban development. What happened to other communities over a period of decades occurred in Richmond in a few years.

Some of the questions I wanted to explore in the interviews were--who were these newcomers to Richmond and were there reasons, beyond the promise of a job, which brought them in steady streams by trains, buses, and automobiles hauling make-shift trailers? And was this destination of Richmond, California, all that they had imagined?

Other questions were just as compelling. After the war ended and Kaiser and fifty-five other industries moved out of Richmond, leaving this new population suddenly unemployed, what made people stay? And for those who left Richmond and returned home to their families in the South and Midwest, what made them come back to Richmond a second time, often bringing relatives with them?

As intrigued as I was by this new population, I also wanted to know how Richmond natives experienced these changes. In a sense, as others moved in to find new homes in Richmond, the longtime residents were losing their once small and familiar home town.

Initially, I tried to locate people who were living and working in Richmond before the World War II boom. They worked in the canneries, at the Chevron Refinery, or made their living fishing in San Pablo Bay. Most of these first interviewees were California natives, born and raised in Richmond. But the majority of the interviewees for this project came from other places--Texas, Arkansas, Oklahoma, Missouri, Iowa, Idaho, Utah--all to start a new life in California. Each one had a story to tell. Armed with a tape recorder, a camera, and lots of unanswered questions, I set out to record these local residents.

INTERVIEW SETTING

With few exceptions, the initial interview took place at the narrator's home. Because I was recording a diverse group, the interview setting varied dramatically. One day I might be in a neighborhood where residents, fearing stray bullets, keep their curtains drawn and their lights dimmed. Another day I would be in a home with a sweeping view of the bay, built by a former cannery owner during the Depression.

When possible, I recorded additional interviews and photographed at locations where the narrators had lived or worked. Some of these included the former Filice and Perrelli Canning Company, Ferry Point, Point San Pablo Yacht Harbor, and the last remaining World War II shipyard structures...since torn down. I also spent many days off shore. When interviewing Dominic and Tony Ghio, fishermen for over sixty years, I accompanied them on dawn fishing trips in San Pablo Bay. However, following a turbulent twelve-hour whale watching excursion to the Farallon Islands with former whaler Pratt Peterson, I vowed to continue my research on land.

When I asked some project participants to give me a personalized tour of Richmond to see what landmarks were important to them, all too often I was shown vacant lots where a family home, church, or favorite cafe once stood. The downtown, once bustling with movie theaters, dance halls, and department stores, is eerily quiet for a city of 82,000. I found that local residents are still angry over the loss of their downtown district during the 1960s redevelopment era. Longtime residents spoke emotionally of the city losing its center. Hilltop Mall, built on the outskirts of town and accessible by automobile, was no substitute for a shopping district in the middle of town. The struggle to rebuild the downtown and to attract new businesses is an ongoing one for the City of Richmond.

After the interviewing was completed, there were photo sessions in the narrator's homes and former work places, as well as meetings in which we went through family albums and trunks. Some wonderful photographs and the stories behind them were uncovered during this process. Copies are included in the individual volumes.

PUBLIC USES OF THE ORAL HISTORIES

From the early stages of this project, both the text from the oral histories and the collection of photographs, have been used in community events. Examples include photo panels and maritime demonstrations at Richmond's Festival by the Bay, 1985, 1986, and 1987; and Oakland's Seafest '87. An exhibition, "Fishermen by Trade: On San Francisco Bay with the Ghio Brothers," produced in collaboration with the Richmond Museum in 1988, was developed from the oral history interviews with Dominic and Tony Ghio.

In an effort to present the oral histories to the public in a form which retained the language, the dialects, and the flavor of the original interviews, I wrote "Boomtown," a play about the transformation of Richmond during World War II. "Boomtown" was produced by San Francisco's Tale Spinners Theater and toured Bay Area senior centers, schools, and museums in 1989.

A new direction for the oral histories is in the field of adult literacy. Nearly fifty years after the recruitment of men and women from the rural South and Midwest to work in the Kaiser shipyards, some former shipyard workers and many of their descendents are enrolled in LEAP, Richmond's adult literacy program, where the students range in ages from 16 to 85 and are 70 percent black.

Our current goal is to make a shortened, large print version of the oral history transcripts for use by adult literacy students and tutors. We think that by using the true stories of local residents as literacy text, there will be an additional incentive for adults learning to read. The characters in the oral histories are often their neighbors, friends, and families speaking in their own words on such topics as the Dust Bowl, the World War II migration of defense workers, waterfront industries, family and community life.

THANKS

"On the Waterfront" project has had many diverse layers, including the University of California, the advisory committee, a wide range of financial supporters, and of primary importance, a large group of interviewees. I want to thank all of the project participants who donated their time, enthusiasm, and memories to this project.

Special thanks is due Jim Quay, Executive Director of the California Council for the Humanities, who has been a source of good advice and inspiration from the beginning. The Council's grant in 1984 got the project off the ground, kicking off the campaign for matching funds. Jim Quay's counsel last summer set in motion the completion of the oral histories by introducing me to the California State Library grant programs.

y Area historian Chuck Wollenberg and labor folklorist ie Green have been my primary advisors, as well as ors, from the early planning stages. Chuck provided ght into how Richmond's transition during World War II into the larger picture of California history. Archie en reinforced my belief that as chroniclers of history must continue to document the lives of working people.

From the preliminary research to the completed project, thleen Rupley, curator of the Richmond Museum, has been ormously supportive. Working in collaboration with thleen, and Museum staff Paula Hutton and Joan Connolly the "Fishermen by Trade" exhibition was an invigorating xperience as well as an excellent example of how two rganizations pooled their talents and resources to create popular community event.

Stanley Nystrom, a Museum volunteer and lifelong Richmond resident, has been a continuing resource to me. A local history buff, with a great sense of detail, he assisted me often.

Finally, I want to thank Adelia Lines and Emma Clarke of the Richmond Public Library, Sharon Pastori of the LEAP program, and Rhonda Rios Kravitz and Gary Strong of the California State Library for their support in making possible the completion of these oral history volumes and their distribution to several Bay Area public libraries which serve minority populations.

CLOSING THOUGHTS

In my work I am most interested in recording the stories of people who are undocumented in history and who are unlikely to leave written records behind. For me, the strength of this project has been seeing the transformation in how the interviewees view their relationship to history. They came a long way from our first contact when a typical response to my request for an interview was, "Why do you want to interview me?" or "What's important about my life?" And "Why Richmond?" With some encouragement, many became actively involved in the research and the collection of photographs, and began recommending others to be interviewed. "On the Waterfront: An Oral History of Richmond, California," became <u>their</u> project, with a life of its own.

This set of oral histories is by no means the whole story of Richmond. It is one piece of its history and one effort to generate community-based literature. I hope that it will encourage others to record the stories, the songs, and the traditions of our community members. They have a lot to teach us.

Judith K. Dunning
Project Director

February 23, 1990
Regional Oral History Office
Room 486 The Bancroft Library
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INTERVIEW HISTORY

Henry O'Hara

Two interviews were conducted in March and April of 1985 with Henry O'Hara, a lifelong Point Richmond resident. We met in the white stucco house on Washington Street where he had lived since his birth in 1911. When I expressed surprise at his remaining in this family home, Mr. O'Hara told me, "I'm not the only one. There are others like myself who have spent a lifetime." His family moved to Point Richmond from Whiting, Indiana, among a group of original workers recruited for Standard Oil. His father was a stillman and operator at the refinery. His mother was a homemaker and churchworker.

Mr. O'Hara, a University of San Francisco graduate, was an active parishioner in Our Lady of Mercy Catholic Church, the same church where he was baptized. He was a fifty-year member of the Elks and the Knights of Columbus. Mr. O'Hara retired in 1976 from the Marine Personnel Department of Chevron's San Francisco office after forty years of service. He told me during his interview, "My whole life has been surrounded around something of a maritime nature." From 1931 to 1937, he worked as a deckhand and a mate on the Richmond-San Rafael Ferry.

When I first met Mr. O'Hara, he was recovering from fractured shoulders and two fractured vertebrae, a result of osteoporosis. Because it was difficult for him to sit for very long, our sessions were limited to one hour each. His presentation was concise, and I found his recollections of the Richmond waterfront to be especially helpful since he described the function of each pier along the shoreline. He talked about some of the reasons why Richmond's containerized Terminal No. 3 has not been an economic success. His explanation was that the original terminal design was poor because there was only berthing facility for one ship, making the turnaround time too slow.

Asked about the future for the City of Richmond, Mr. O'Hara described it as being "dead center," not going in any direction. He said, "I really shouldn't say that I don't have any hope for Richmond. I would like to see Richmond prosper and develop, but for the life of me, I can't see how or where it's going to do that."

Like many longtime Richmond residents, who have witnessed many changes in their city, Mr. O'Hara talked about the absence

of a viable downtown--"Downtown redevelopment drove merchants out of business from Sixth Street and Macdonald to Sixteenth Street. It looks like a disaster area. People expected a mall and nice restaurants which never got off the ground."

At the close of the interview, as I was leaving Mr. O'Hara's home, a young neighbor stopped by to inquire about his health, parting with the words, "If you need anything, remember we're just next door." I looked at Mr. O'Hara, his face reddened and unable to speak, and thought he might be choking or having a heart attack. Then I saw tears. Later he told me that it was the kindness shown to him by friends and neighbors that had moved him so.

Henry O'Hara died on January 2, 1989, after an extended stay in a convalescent hospital. Services were conducted at Our Lady of Mercy Church in the Point Richmond neighborhood where he had spent a lifetime. The church was filled with his friends and neighbors.

Judith K. Dunning
Project Director

March 16, 1990
The Regional Oral History Office
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University of California at Berkeley

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Family Background

[Interview 1: March 28, 1985]##

From Whiting, Indiana, to Point Richmond, 1902

Dunning: What is your full name?

O'Hara: James Henry O'Hara.

Dunning: Where were you born?

O'Hara: I was born right in Point Richmond. I'm a native son.

Dunning: What year?

O'Hara: June 6, 1911.

Dunning: Do you know where your parents were born?

##This symbol indicates that a tape or a segment of a tape has begun or ended.

O'Hara: Oh certainly. My father came here for the Standard Oil Company of California in 1902, when they were starting the refinery. He was a native of County Longford, Ireland.

My mother came a few years later. She was a native of County Mayo, Ireland. The name of the town would be Swintford. My parents met here in Point Richmond, however, they were not married until 1906, in Los Angeles, California.

My uncle was one of the early day pioneer hotel owners. He owned and built the property on Cottage Avenue, which is now called the Ivy Inn.

Dunning: Backtracking a little bit, did your family ever talk about the area that they came from in Ireland, and what it was like?

O'Hara: My mother was quite conversant on that. My father was so small when he came to this country. Originally, his family came to Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania. Then he migrated to Whiting, Indiana, which is just adjacent to Chicago. He worked there for the Standard Oil Company. When the Standard Oil Company purchased the Richmond property, he, along with several others, came with them as their original employees.

Dunning: Do you know how old he was at that time?

O'Hara: I really don't know. He was just a young man.

Dunning: Is that how, to the best of your knowledge, Standard Oil got most of their first employees? They recruited from existing Standard Oil plants?

O'Hara: To the best of my knowledge that's how it worked. There were many families, and there are still some families here right at the Point, who came from

Whiting, Indiana, with that original group. My father was one of the first, though, in 1902. Others came trickling along a few years later. He was one of the original.

Dunning: Did he talk about what Richmond was like when he first came here?

O'Hara: Occasionally once in a while he would reminisce. There was nothing but the downtown area and Point Richmond in, particular.

Point Richmond, I should tell you, was actually an island in those days. It was connected with a railroad trestle between the Richmond proper and someplace near the Santa Fe tracks down here. There wasn't much in Richmond, or practically nothing in Richmond. They had very few buildings in Point Richmond other than old wooden sidewalks. The object was to stay on the sidewalk, because if you got off the sidewalk, you probably fell into a mud puddle.

But that was about all. He used to reminisce, and my mother the same way, remembered the early days, of course, too.

Dunning: Did she talk about her home town in Ireland?

O'Hara: My mother came from Ireland when she was a teenage girl. Her mother died and the family scattered in all directions. Some went to Wales and Great Britain. She came with a sister and two brothers to Redlands, California. She was a teenager then, but she had a very good memory, and she used to reminisce occasionally about childhood things, but nothing specific.

Dunning: How many children in your family?

O'Hara: Just Gladyes, my sister, since passed away in 1982.

Dunning: Was she older or younger?

O'Hara: She was older than me. She was retired from the Richmond school department. She, like myself, was also born here in Point Richmond and went all through the local schools, and San Francisco State Teacher's College, as it was known then, and had done some graduate work in the University of California.

Home Life in Point Richmond

Father's Work at Standard Oil

Dunning: Can you describe a typical day for your mother when you were young, things that you remember her doing most?

O'Hara: Well, I guess practically every day was a typical day, because a woman's work seems to be never done. She, in the morning, would get us kids off to school. I went to Washington School, which is still here, but not the original building. We would come home at noontime and have our lunch. She always had some little goodies fixed for us. Then back to school and back home again in the afternoon. She always had supper ready for us.

Our dad was a shift worker. He worked shift work. In the early days, they worked six days a week, and were glad to get it. They had one day off. It went from eight to four, and four to twelve, and twelve to eight. He just continually rotated the shift, so usually he was working or else sleeping from the night he just put in at the refinery.

My mother always kept things going in the home. I can't say there was one specific day that was different than the other. Every day was washing and ironing, mending, things of that type.

Dunning: Did she work outside the home?

O'Hara: No, no. My mother was a homemaker all the time.

Dunning: Could you describe her for me? What was she like?

O'Hara: That's pretty hard because she was--well, I'm tall, and she too was tall, and white-haired, like myself. She had a good personality, had legions of friends, and was a good church worker, and, I guess, a good mother.

Dunning: Was the church an important part of your childhood?

O'Hara: Oh, yes. We've been life members of Our Lady of Mercy Church here on the Point.

Dunning: That is a Catholic church?

O'Hara: Yes, it's Our Lady of Mercy Catholic Church here in Point Richmond. It's on Richmond Avenue. We have been members of that parish ever since birth. In fact, I was baptized in the church, as was my sister.

Dunning: That's quite a beautiful church.

O'Hara: It is, yes. Beautiful.

Dunning: How about your father? What was he like?

O'Hara: Like I said, he worked shift work. He was a quiet man, but a good father and a good attentive father. When he had the time, he spent a lot of time with my sister and myself. But, like other men in his neighborhood, he

spent six days a week working shift work. Well, they didn't get much time for being in a social world at all. That's for sure.

Dunning: What was his job at Standard Oil?

O'Hara: He was in those days what is known as a stillman. I think now that title is an operator. I think that's what they call them now. In those days, it was a big piece of equipment. Now it would be considered obsolete for sure.

Dunning: What kind of equipment was it?

O'Hara: That's where they used to refine the oil. In other words, they had the crude oil, and they would run it in these huge, big stills and actually boil it. At particular points they would take off particular oils out of the crude.

Now, they were flat. I wouldn't say they were flat. I mean, it took a lot of land. They were called batteries. They were a big, brick base, and these long boiler-like things that were probably forty feet long and maybe fifteen, twenty feet in diameter. Now, they go up in the air. That way they don't take as much space. "Towers," I believe they call them now.

Dunning: What would his job actually be as a stillman?

O'Hara: That I really don't know. I have had no association to any degree with the refinery. But I guess at particular points, when this oil reached a certain viscosity, then they would take off whatever it was. In those days, of course, they didn't get as much out of the crude oil as they do now. Now they take it right down to the last drop. In those days, well, I really don't know. I can't speak with authority on that at all.

Dunning: Did he keep the same job for many years?

O'Hara: That's right. He worked thirty-nine years. I've worked thirty-nine years for the company.

Dunning: Also? That's quite a coincidence.

O'Hara: It certainly is. I'll say.

Dunning: Getting back a little to your childhood, did you have any special household chores as a child?

O'Hara: All children in those days had something to do. Nothing particular. We used to assist with the garden and things like that. I was always willing to help my mother, as was my sister too. She was good at it. Nothing particular, other than grocery shopping and things of that type.

Dunning: Would you give me a flavor of what Point Richmond was like, from your early memories?

O'Hara: Point Richmond was a very homey type of a place because the people were here for years. In those days, they were stable people. People had bought their homes and were raising their families, and the children were in school. Everybody seemed to know each other. It was a nice place to live and a nice safe town, as it is now. We had no problems. We had a police department and a fire department here that were never called on very often. It was just a nice family town.

Dunning: Did most of the people that worked work for the refinery?

O'Hara: They seemed to in those days, yes. Now there's very few people living at Point Richmond who work at the refinery. In those days, practically everybody in this block worked in the refinery.

Dunning: Did it feel like a company town?

O'Hara: Not particualrly. The company was very good, as they are now. They never meddled in any of the town politics or anything. They never tried to assert themselves in any way into anything. No, it wasn't a company town, that's for sure, as I think of company towns being.

A Lifetime in the Point

Dunning: What was the house that you lived in like, and where was it?

O'Hara: Right here.

Dunning: Oh this? 324 Washington Street.

O'Hara: I was born right in this house. That's easy to explain. You're looking at it.

Dunning: You've spent your entire life in this house?

O'Hara: Yes. It's been my home all the time, and my address all the time. There's others like me. I'm not the only one here in Point Richmond. There's others, like myself, who have spent a lifetime here.

Dunning: Any names that come to your mind? Any of your friends that are still here?

O'Hara: Oh yes. On the corner up here, Walter Hess. He's been here like myself. Mary Casey, on Golden Gate Avenue, has been here since 1906. Marion Downey, on Crest Avenue, she's an old Whiting, Indiana, family, as was my father. Her father came from Whiting at the same

time. They came probably about 1905, or 1906; somewhere along through there. There's a lot of them around. They're descendants of the old families.

Dunning: You mention that you went to the Washington School.

O'Hara: Yes.

Dunning: And it was a different building at that time?

O'Hara: Different building. At that time it was a multi-storied cement building. We took all grades there in the early days, from grade one up through the eighth grade. Children graduated with a ceremony and were sent to the Richmond High School, which in those days was on Twenty-third Street, the area right now where I believe there's an auto supply company on that particuar property now.

When I got to the sixth grade, they built Roosevelt Junior High. At that time, it would have been 1923. The 1926 grade they sent everybody to Roosevelt Junior High School, which is located on Ninth Street in Richmond. Now, I believe, it's called Gompers. Roosevelt Junior High took all the kids from grades seven, eight, and nine for three years. Then the next three years you went into the high school, which at that time, I said, was located on Twenty-third. They didn't build a new high school at the present location of where the high school is now. That too is a new building. That is where I went to high school, there.

High School Graduation During the Depression

Dunning: What year did you finish high school?

O'Hara: June 5, 1929.

Dunning: What a year.

O'Hara: That's true. But fortunately I got a job when I got out. That's right at the peak of the Depression.

Dunning: Did you have a certain hint or ideas of what your life would be like as a teenager? Certain ambitions?

O'Hara: I've been interested in boats all my life. Ever since I was a small child I was always interested in water and boats. It was all I seemed to think about and dream about.

Dunning: Living on the Point probably really encouraged that.

O'Hara: Actually, it might. After school, when we were kids, we used to always take a walk, a lot of us. We always seemed to end up down at the beach, Keller's Beach, which is now a park area which has changed considerably. That seemed to be the place where all the kids ended up. We sailed little boats, and big boats, and everything there. My whole life actually has been surrounded around something of a maritime nature.

Dunning: Is there training in some field that you would have liked?

O'Hara: Probably. A secondary thing, I liked drawing. I used to be the star in drawing class. I think if I had given it serious thought, I would have gone into drafting, but I didn't seem to follow through with it.

Dunning: You could have designed boats.

O'Hara: That was what I was thinking about.

Dunning: When did you get your first job?

O'Hara: I graduated from high school in 1929, as I mentioned prior. A few days later I got a job in the Standard Oil refinery here in Richmond, in the barrel house. I was what they called a junior helper. The junior helper worked six days a week and we got $113 a month. Had I been twenty-one, I would have gotten the maximum pay, which everybody else got that worked on that particular thing, regardless of how long they had been there. It would have been $129 a month.

After about fourteen months of that, then the Depression was really getting depressing, and I got laid off. That was the end of the job, of course. I was unemployed until the following February, when I got another job.

Curtailed Work Plan at Standard Oil

Dunning: Was your father able to keep his job during the Depression?

O'Hara: Yes. Well, they cut down on the time actually. They worked three days one week and four days the next week. The curtailed work plan, they called it.

Dunning: Did the Depression really change things in this area?

O'Hara: Well, actually, I shouldn't say not in particular, because our own family wasn't affected by it, but it had a gross effect on a lot of families. I look back and I think that people were more or less sufficient. They were able to handle the situation. I don't know what would happen if we were to have a similar situation in this day and age.

Richmond-San Rafael Ferry

Dunning: Then you went back to work that following February, so that was in February of 1930?

O'Hara: No, 1931.

Dunning: Were you still a junior helper?

O'Hara: I didn't go back to work in a refinery. I went to work on the Richmond-San Rafael ferry boats.

Dunning: Really? I just finished an interview with "Tubby" [Marion] Snodgrass.

O'Hara: Oh, sure. Tubby and I are old friends. I went to junior high and high school with him. He used to be the cook. [laughs]. He stayed there all the time. He was the superintendent when that thing folded up, you know.

Yes, I know Tubby. He went to Roosevelt Junior High. In fact, we just celebrated our fifty-fifth anniversary out at Richmond High School. We had Tubby and myself, and a bunch of others of course, down at the El Cerrito Club, or Cerrito Club, or whatever they call it. I've known Tubby all those years.

Dunning: How did you get the job at the Richmond-San Rafael ferries?

O'Hara: I just applied for it. My inclination--I tried other places and it was hard. I went out there and applied for work and I got hired on a Washington's Birthday in 1931. They needed to put an extra boat on, so I guess I looked like a likely candidate for it. I was hired as the deckhand. Then I worked there for four years. During that time I advanced up to a mate's job on the ferry boats.

Fortunately, in the company you could take a leave or go through a union negotiation and still maintain your service, so in 1933 I went to enroll in the University of San Francisco and still continued to work intermittently for the San Rafael ferry boats. On weekends, and every summer, and every spare moment I had I went to work there. It was a good job, a very good job.

Dunning: Do you have any special memories of the ferries?

O'Hara: None in particular other than the nice people I worked with. It was a good open-air job. I liked the work. You met a lot of people, passengers, going back and forth. [tape interruption]

Job with the Marine Personnel Section of Standard Oil, 1937

Dunning: We were talking about the ferry boats.

O'Hara: I worked there until 1937. In 1937 I was fortunate enough to get a job in the marine department for the Standard Oil Company in San Francisco at 225 Bush Street. There's where I spent all my career, with them.

Dunning: What was your job there?

O'Hara: I was attached to the marine personnel section of the company, where we did all the employing, company benefits, and things of that type.

Dunning: Was the fact that your father worked for Standard Oil helpful in getting you back in?

O'Hara: I wouldn't say it was particularly helpful, but it was instrumental, let's say, in swinging my thoughts towards the Standard Oil Company. However, I had applied in other companies. But as I look back, and as I mention to my friends, I'm certainly glad I found Standard Oil Company on November 1, 1937.

Dunning: Was your father still working?

O'Hara: No, he had been retired by that time. But it has been a good company. It's been good to me.

Dunning: How did you happen to get the job in San Francisco as opposed to the one right in Richmond.

O'Hara: Actually, in Richmond it would have meant I would be in a refinery, and I wasn't particularly interested in the refinery. I had gone to college for four years and I actually felt that was where I wanted to be. Something like going to heaven.

Dunning: Did you graduate from USF?

O'Hara: That's right. Yes.

Commuting to San Francisco by Ferry

Dunning: How did you commute to San Francisco?

O'Hara: That was interesting. In those days the Southern Pacific had a ferry service that ran from San Francisco to Richmond. That was put into effect, I would say, probably in the mid-1920s. I think one reason was because when the Ford plant moved here, it allowed the workers, who were San Francisco people, to commute back and forth. They also sent the finished cars from here to San Francisco on those ferry boats. They ran a good

service. I was able to get to downtown--they were right on Park Place--in the morning along about six-thirty or so, and take me to the ferry.

Dunning: Where was that ferry boat?

O'Hara: The terminal of the dock itself is only partially there, but that was right at the end of Garrard Boulevard, or Dornan Drive it is now. It's right at the very end of the street, right where the--

Dunning: Opposite the Petromark?

O'Hara: Yes. Right where Terminal No. 1 is, the big warehouse right along side there. Anyway, we got into San Francisco at seven-thirty, and I took the number five streetcar up Market Street and got that to Fulton Street where USF is located at about five minutes to eight, and I was right on time for an eight o'clock class. That was wonderful. I reversed myself at night coming home.

The last year, 1937, they discontinued the ferry service. That left not only myself, but many other people dependent on that. The only way you could then go to San Francisco was through the Southern Pacific at Sixteenth Street in Richmond. So irregardless of my class hours, I had to get the Overland Limited to San Francisco.

Dunning: What was that?

O'Hara: The Overland Limited was a great big train that ran right across the United States and went through Richmond every morning at five minutes to six.

Dunning: And you would have to catch that?

O'Hara: You would have to catch that. That took you to the Oakland Mole, which is no longer in existence.

Dunning: Where would this have been, the Oakland Mole?

O'Hara: That's presently located about where the container terminals are. If you ever go over on the San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge, look off to the left. You can see the big container docks. The Oakland Mole was in that area, which has since been all stripped out, and filled in, and made into a container terminal. That was the base for the Southern Pacific trains that came from the north, and from the east, and from the south. They had a huge, big ferry terminal there and very good service.

I got the Overland Limited, which was the big transcontinental train full of passengers. I wasn't the only one. There were other people there. We would get on the train at five minutes to six in the morning. Then I would get out to USF by eight o'clock.

Sometimes, however, through snow, as like in this particular time of the year, we're hearing about Highway Eighty being closed, the train would be late. Everybody then would go across the street and take the Key System, which was the name of the transit system then, to Albany, and then take the train there and go down to the Oakland Mole and take the ferry. That didn't happen very often. Amazingly, the service was good.

Dunning: That's if the train was late? Then you would go to Albany?

O'Hara: If the train was late. So I could be out at USF at eight o'clock. I will admit it took a lot of determination, but I was determined. And I had a very good home life. My parents were very helpful and gave a lot of encouragement, so I wasn't discouraged. That's for sure.

Dunning: What did you study at USF?

O'Hara: I took economics. I took a business administration course.

Dunning: Was it all Jesuit taught at that time?

O'Hara: Some Jesuits did teach some of the particular courses, but their accounting and economics and history courses as I recall were taught by non-clergical people.

Dunning: It's interesting hearing you talk about the transportation sytem. Why did they stop the ferry area in 1937 from Richmond?

O'Hara: Just for lack of business, really. I mean, it cut the service back considerably.

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O'Hara: The main form of transportation from Point Richmond all the way to the outer extremity of Oakland was by streetcar.

Dunning: Would that be cable?

O'Hara: No. It was a streetcar. It ran with a trolley up on the wire. They came out here to Point Richmond and then they terminated at the Standard Oil refinery. People wanting to go to the Richmond-San Rafael ferry on these footpaths would then transfer to a little streetcar that took them from the Standard Oil refinery property out to the San Rafael ferry. Eventually the streetcar had become obsolete, of course, and they were replaced by buses.

They had two feeder lines in Richmond. One crossed Sixth Street at Richmond and went on to North Richmond, and then the--

Dunning: It crossed Sixth Street and what?

O'Hara: It crossed Sixth and Macdonald, then continued on down through the Cutting Boulevard area and terminated someplace way around Fourteenth Street. The other one went from about where Saint Paul's Church is, in San Pablo, and came down Twenty-third Street, connected with anything at Twenty-third and Macdonald, and went up Macdonald on the way out to what is now known as Alvarado Park, but used to be called Grand Canyon Park in those days.

Actually, there's been a big change in modes of transportation, so that was the end of the streetcars, as there have been in all the cities, San Francisco and any place included.

Dunning: Was there a streetcar that went out to Ferry Point?

O'Hara: No. The way you got there was by a bus, with the Key System bus. That came down through Richmond, down through Park Place here at the Point, out through the tunnel, and straight out Dornan Drive all the way. It terminated right at the ferry terminal there, which is now Warehouse Number One, I guess, for the City of Richmond.

Dunning: You mentioned that the ferry stopped going to San Francisco in '37. Did it ever start up again?

O'Hara: No. You see, what happened, it was a tremendous change then because there were ferry boats all over the Bay. When the bridges were completed--the Oakland Bridge and the Golden Gate Bridge were completed about the same time--and that was the end of the ferry boats in that area.

Dunning: That was it?

O'Hara: That was it because they couldn't compete. Everybody wanted to ride the bridge. Also, on the Oakland Bridge, the Key Route trains continued on over the Oakland Bridge. They went on the lower deck of the bridge. As years went by, of course, they changed that and took them off too, and they made it double deck for automobiles and trucks on the bridge.

Dunning: There was only the Richmond-San Rafael ferry left?

O'Hara: That was terminated when they built the Richmond-San Rafael Bridge, and that was the end of that.

Dunning: That was around 1956.

O'Hara: Yes. That was the end of that.

Dunning: Did you find it easier to get to San Francisco when you could take the ferry, or did it amount to about the same time?

O'Hara: It was much easier when we took the ferry boat from Point Richmond. It was about forty-five minutes crossing on the ferry boat, but it was a nice comfortable ride, and gave me a good chance to do my homework, too. I was going to school at the time there. It was good; no problem at all.

Description of Richmond's Waterfront

Keller's Beach

Dunning: I'm trying to get a sense of what the waterfront in this area looked liked, and what was happening on it. You mentioned that you and your friends had gone to Keller's Beach, and you said that it was very different then.

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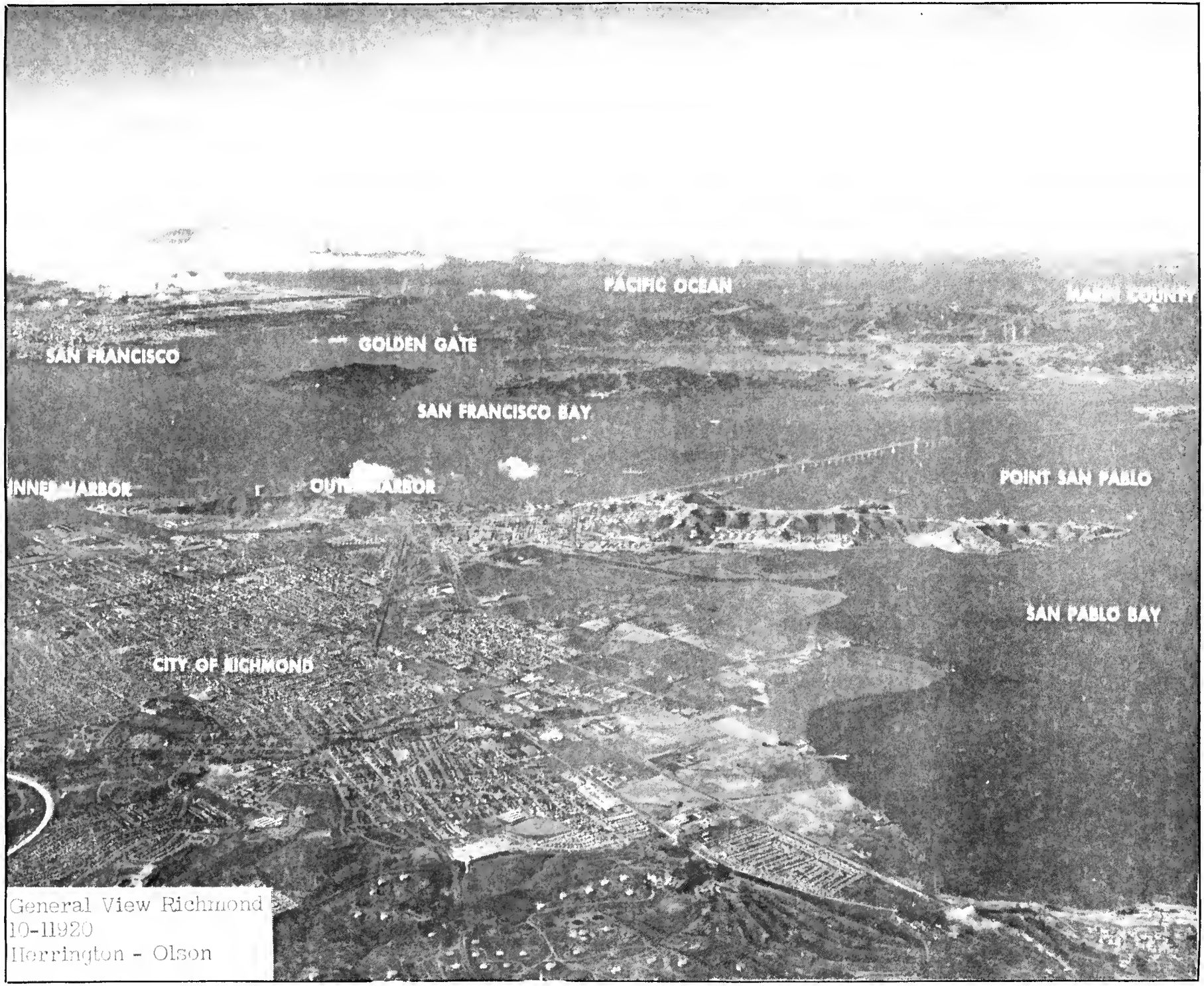

General View Richmond
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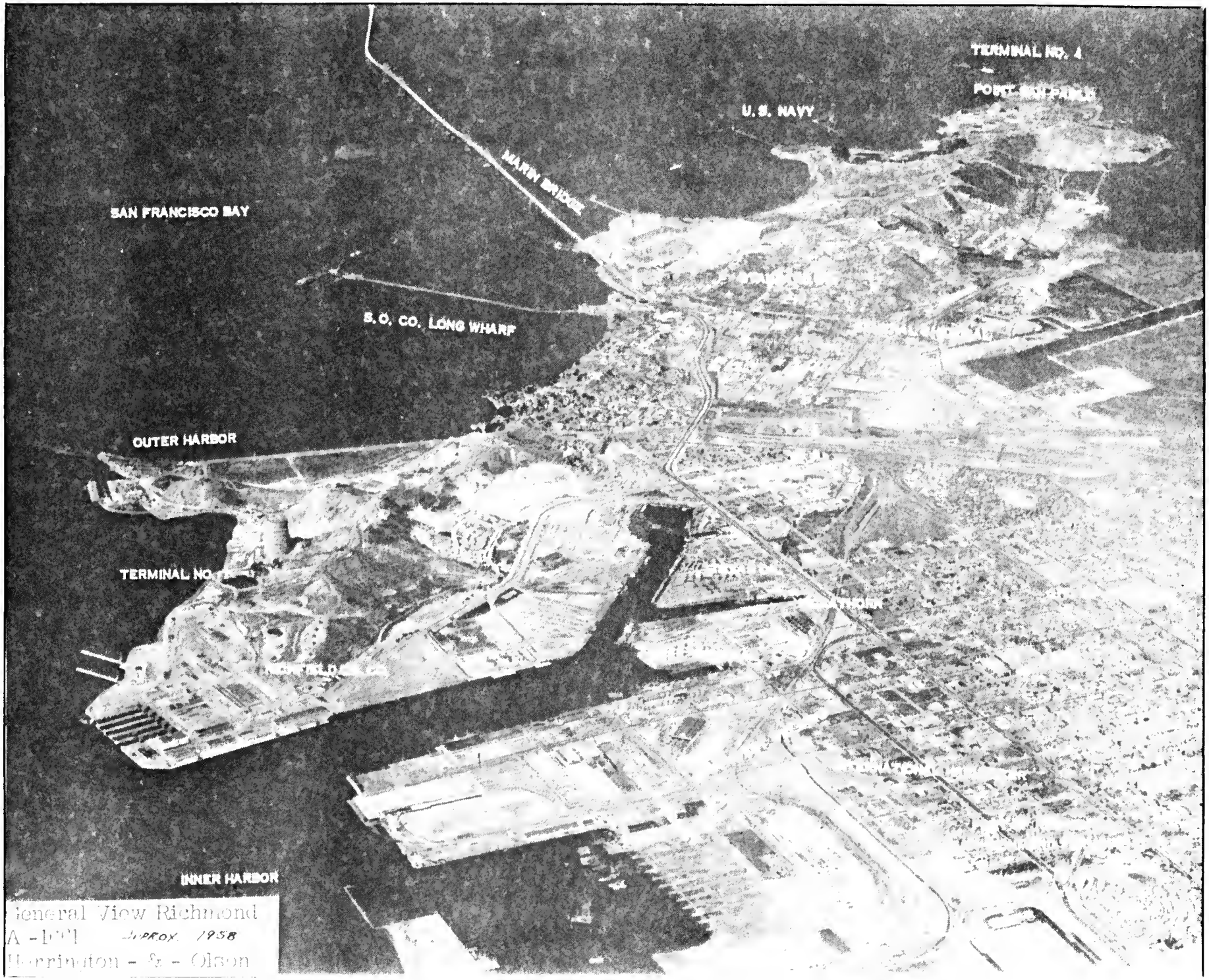

General View Richmond
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Herrington - & - Olson

O'Hara: Yes. Keller's Beach was owned by a woman, Mrs. Keller, and her son, Danny Keller. They ran a small little boat harbor there and rented boats. People would go swimming there, and they had a little wharf projecting out in the water, a little short wharf where they could launch the boats when the tide was correct for it. They in turn lived in a little house just above the train tunnel.

Dunning: It almost looks like a little farmhouse that's still standing?

O'Hara: That's that same property on it, but it's not the same house. That's a new house, actually, just built in recent years. They lived there, and they used to take care of it, and I will admit it was a meager existence for them, but they seemed to exist and got along okay.

As kids, we used to go down there and play in the sand, and skip rocks in the water, and walk along the water, along the cliffs. We didn't require too much excitement in those days. It was just a nice way to spend an afternoon, or Saturday, or Sunday.

Parr Terminal No. 4

As far as the waterfront is concerned, the land hasn't changed any, but the operations have changed a lot. You can start up at Point San Pablo. That used to be known as Parr 4. You see, Mr. Parr, Fred Parr, took over the management of the terminals. He was a terminal man also in San Francisco, and he managed the Richmond terminals. They had four of them.

The one at Point San Pablo, starting up there, was Parr 4, and it had been Point San Pablo to many people. If you were to ask somebody where Parr 4 was, they probably couldn't tell you. But that's Point San Pablo.

Dunning: Is that where the harbormasters live now, and where there's a little yacht club?

O'Hara: No, it's up right opposite the Brothers Lighthouse.

Dunning: Yes.

O'Hara: I don't think there's anybody living there on that dock at all. There's some chemical companies in there now, but as far as anything going to that terminal, it's very, very seldom.

Point Orient and the Old Sailing Ships

O'Hara: Then coming down the Bay you come to Point Orient, which is the Standard Oil terminal. That is an historical terminal, actually. That is where the old sailing ships used to load the case oil in the early days, oil for the lamps of China. The Standard Oil Company had sailing ships of their own in those days, way back about 1919. They had ships the *Radiant*, the *Brilliant*, *Daylight*, and then the *John Ena*. That's J-o-h-n E-n-a. It's named after a Honolulu businessman I understand.

They used to have a can factory and load kerosene in these cans. The building is now gone, but just across the road you may see kind of a hollow spot in the hill there. That was the Standard Oil's original can factory where they would load the two five gallon

cans in a wooden case. These sailing ships would take over a thousand cases and sail off to China. It was quite a thing for the time.

Dunning: Where did you hear these stories from? Your father?

O'Hara: Stories from my father. In fact, I'll show you a book I have. There are pictures of them.

Dunning: What kind of sailing vessels were they?

O'Hara: They were huge big four-mast ships. They were big ships. The company had them. It didn't last too long. About 1919 was the end of them. Steam tankers were coming into existence.

Standard Oil wasn't the only company that had sailing ships. A lot of companies had sailing ships, but I wouldn't say on the Pacific Coast. I don't know of any other oil campany that had them. A lot of companies had them. Then we got into steamships of course, steam tankers.

Coming down the Bay further, then you come to the San Rafael ferry terminal, as I was talking about.

Dunning: I was down there with Tubby Snodgrass last week. We went down to the site.

O'Hara: Oh. Were you? The original site was right where--it's kind of hard to find now--but it's right about at the base of the bridge. Blake Brothers Quarry was there. The original terminal was there. Some years later, I don't know, maybe, taking a big wild guess, 1925, or something like that, they moved to the present site, the present terminal.

Long Wharf

O'Hara: Then coming down to the Standard Oil terminal, that's probably the second wharf they had. The original wharf was just a little stub of wharf out there many, many years ago, but then they extended it out. It's that one about a mile in the bay.

Dunning: I think it was Long Wharf.

O'Hara: Standard Oil Long Wharf, yes. They rebuilt that wharf about 1945 or 1946. It's a concrete wharf that will last forever. In recent years, because of the length of the tankers now that are coming there, they've had to extend it out on each end with what is known as a dolphin; several pilings driven into the sand, and then they bridge it with some bridgework in there.

Dunning: Was there more activity on the wharf at that time? Looking out there now, because everything is piped in, you see a shuttle bus going back and forth but you hardly ever see any people.

O'Hara: That's true. That's what I was going to talk about. Yesterday I had lunch with a group of friends that I worked with, and that's the very thing we talked about.

When I joined the company in 1937, we had twenty-two ocean-going ships, and probably ten or twelve inland boats. Now the company is reduced to about a third of that with ocean-going U.S. flagships, the reason being that they're faster and hold more, and they can make a quicker turn around. They charge a lot of the work out, too, now.

In answer to your question, I will admit it looks like a scarcity of business when you don't see much around other than the bus going back and forth on the dock. But they're there.

Dunning: You know the tonnage is really up.

O'Hara: Yes, because those big ships coming, they're a thousand feet long, against these other ones that were maybe three hundred feet long.

The Scofield Cut

O'Hara: The pipeline runs from the wharf straight up into the refinery, as you can see, through what we called "the cut."

Dunning: What does that mean?

O'Hara: Actually, that land used to be a little hill in the early days. The Standard Oil people always referred to it as "the cut." In the early days, when people on the Point had nothing much to do, they used to walk out there and just sit on the hill and watch these people cut that land down so they could put the pipeline through there. This goes way back to probably 1904, or somewhere along through there, or maybe after that.

I believe it's called Scofield Cut. Scofield was a pioneer in the Standard Oil business here. They referred to it as "the cut."

The pipelines go from the wharf through the cut into the refinery. That wharf is a good wharf. It can hold four ships across the face of the wharf. It's not very often you find four there, but sometimes you'll see four there.

Santa Fe Terminal

O'Hara: Then coming down further you come to the Santa Fe. The Santa Fe terminal is really obsolete now. There again, I mentioned about the Southern Pacific transcontinental trains. Well, the Santa Fe transcontinental trains used to come down there to the Santa Fe terminal. They had two beautiful, big ferry steamers, the *San Pedro* and *San Pablo*, big side wheelers. They had a service between there and San Francisco. Also, freight barges used to come in there, and tugs pushed the barges over.

Occasionally a steam schooner with a load of lumber would come in there too. That was a type of vessel that used to operate on the coast carrying lumber. Up and down the coast, they would go to all these small little lumber ports, like Eureka, and Coos Bay, and places like that, where big ships couldn't get into. They used to come into the Santa Fe terminal occasionally and unload lumber into the cars. Then they would take it off someplace, God knows where. These Santa Fe passenger trains would come down on a regular service. They would come all the way from the East Coast.

Dunning: Richmond was actually the terminus?

O'Hara: Right here down at First and MacDonald actually was the office for them. [tape interruption]

But the Santa Fe terminal at Ferry Point was the end of the line for these transcontinental trains.

Dunning: Is that where the people would get off?

O'Hara: They would get off right there and board the ferry steamer, and the ferry would take them to San Francisco. That would be the end of the line for God knows how many people.

I, once in a while, think back and reminisce of all the people that came to this country, not in particular from within the United States, but people that came to this country, immigrants, and how they come into San Francisco. They come through New York, and from New York they travel by Santa Fe train all the way to Point Richmond, and board the ferry and end up in San Francisco. There must have been legions of people. That was the only way you could go.

Dunning: It's a pretty roundabout route.

O'Hara: It's the only way they could go in those days. They didn't have airplanes. Transcontinental buses weren't even heard of in those days.

Dunning: Do you have any idea how Ferry Point was chosen as a terminus for the Santa Fe?

O'Hara: No, I really don't, because I know little or nothing about Santa Fe history. I assume because, just like the Standard Oil Company, these people are astute people that pick out the property sites, and they know pretty well what they're doing. Consequently they picked the site.

They had to dig the tunnel, too, as you can see there. That must have been some feat in those days. The equipment, I imagine, was all pick and shovel.

Dunning: Did they build the two tunnels, or just that one for the train?

O'Hara: Just the train tunnel. The automobile tunnel wasn't built until about 1915, I believe, in through there.

A lot of the rock and stuff from there was used for fill around here. As I mentioned, Point Richmond in the early days was an island. It's hard to believe that people can now drive to Oakland and San Francisco without probably seeing any water.

I don't remember it myself, but I do remember people. I had worked in the Bay Fleet for seven years for the Standard Oil Company too, which I didn't mention yet, and also on the ferry boats. But some of these people I would work with were old river men, men who had been, in the early days, on stern wheelers.

They said that when it was high tide, they would take a short cut coming down San Pablo Bay, and cut in where the present refinery is, and cut across through what is now Garrard Boulevard, continue out what is now Cutting Boulevard, across Cutting Boulevard, and out where the present yacht harbor is, about in there someplace, and come out through there.

But they had to wait for high tide. I think one of the stern wheelers has an all-time record of something like seventeen hours from Sacramento to San Fracisco, and I'm positive he must have taken that short cut through there.

Getting back to these terminals again. The Santa Fe terminal now, unfortunately, has become obsolete, and they don't use it anymore out there.

Dunning: When was it the most bustling time?

O'Hara: I would say probabaly in the pre-Depression.

Dunning: Do you remember it being a really active, busy place?

O'Hara: I really don't recall any legions of people or anything. What I recall, in 1915, the Panama Pacific Exposition was on. I can remember going with my parents and my sister to San Francisco. The Santa Fe trains had a station right down on about the end of section of where the present railroad tracks are, where you cross Richmond Avenue. Just slightly up a few hundred feet they had the station. We used to get on the train there and go to San Francisco on the big ferry steamers. I was only four years old, but I can remember it quite vividly. I saw this great Panama Pacific Exposition.

I would say, after that period, or probably before the period, in that time, was probably the zenith then.

Now it's nothing there. It's a changing time. Airplanes are taking over rail transportation. You can see that.

Parr Terminal No. 1

Dunning: When did the terminus actually shut down?

O'Hara: With passengers? I don't know. Somebody other than myself would have to answer that one. I would say prior to the war years, prior to 1941. I'm sure it was then. The next terminal would be the Southern Pacific auto ferry we were talking about. It's now obsolete. Then comes the Richmond terminal which we used to call Parr 1. That terminal was completed about 1920. I can remember going to that opening day. There was a big warehouse, and music, and a parade. It was quite an event.

Dunning: What was happening at that terminal?

O'Hara: About 1920? That was to be a big freight terminal. A company had visions of it being a bustling place. It never did seem to ever take for some reason or another. They had ships in there just kind of sporadic. I've never seen anything of any great consequence there.

Dunning: That was a city terminal?

O'Hara: Yes, the City of Richmond. There again, Parr had leased it to operate it, as he did Parr Terminal No. 4, as I mentioned, which is Point San Pablo.

There wasn't anything much all the rest of the way into the Inner Harbor. In the latter years they built Parr 2 and Parr 3, which is now hard to figure out where they are in there. It's kind of hard to contain a terminal now. That would be on the east side of the channel as you would get into the Inner Harbor itself.

Lauritzen's Canal

Then they had a little basin in there called Lauritzen's Canal. Captain Lauritzen had a little boast called the "Maggie," a little freight boat. They went to San Francisco every day in that. The rest of the place would be on the west side of the channel, where Pasha is now and where the shipyards were during the war. Then, as the war came along, then they built the different yards up near the Washington School area. It's hard to find now where they were, but they were there.

Sugar Dock

Dunning: What about the sugar dock?

O'Hara: The sugar dock was an interesting thing, because that was what we would call Parr 2, and have always referred to as the sugar dock. But in the latter years, they moved across to the west side to the channel, over by Pasha, in through there. The Union Oil Company, I think, is in there now. I just read in the paper the other day, where they were going to sell the last of the sugar boats, which is sad.

Dunning: The Komoku?

O'Hara: Yes. They're going to sell it. In fact, a friend of mine has been the weekend watchman down there. He's a retired night superintendent from Standard Oil. He has a master's license and knows all about boats, so he calls me occasionally and talks to me, and tells me about the boat. It's a beautiful boat I understand.

Dunning: I've actually ridden it several times.

O'Hara: Have you?

Dunning: Down to C & H Sugar in Crockett, on the night shift and the day shift.

O'Hara: Was Leo Smith the captain there?

Dunning: I don't think he was.

O'Hara: Leo Smith is a friend of mine, and he was retired from our company.

Dunning: When I've been out, there were two younger fellows.

O'Hara: The sugar boat is an interesting thing. I'm sad to see it meet its demise like this, because I remember when I worked on the San Rafael ferry boats. The sugar boats used to come down every morning at about six o'clock. There was *Crockett*, and the *Dauntless*, big stern wheelers. When business was good, they put a third boat on, called the *Francis*. They would come down the bay, following each other. One would come to Richmond, then it would go to San Francisco and Oakland and deliver the sugar.

I look back, when I'm kind of reminiscent, and think of those days. Those big stern wheelers, they really used to roll.

Dunning: Do you know exactly why the sugar boats are stopping? Is C& H going to use a different route to get the sugar?

O'Hara: Yes. The way I understand it, business isn't too good to start out with, because the people are avoiding sugar. The way I understand it, the way it was in the paper, the Santa Fe couldn't go in there. The Southern Pacific were the people that had the right of way through there. Anything that had to go on the Santa Fe, actually the Southern Pacific didn't pick it up, so they took it down here and unloaded it in Richmond, or San Francisco, or Oakland, where the Santa Fe would get it.

Now, with the Santa Fe and the Southern Pacific merging, which is very apparent, they'll be able to go in there and get it. That will be the end of the sugar boat.

Dunning: The sugar boat *Komoku* had recently been completely renovated.

O'Hara: Yes. I understand it's a nice boat. I understand they've got everything on there. They say it's beautiful.

Dunning: It's actually going to go up for sale?

O'Hara: Yes. It's going to be for sale. Anytime after the First of April, I understand.

A Changing Waterfront

O'Hara: It's sad to see things happen. That's just the story of all these inland boats. I look back and I remember the *Delta Queen* and the *Delta King*, and they would come down from Sacramento. You would see them in the morning coming down the Bay, and all those other ones, all sorts of freight boats and hay barges. It's just the changing times in the maritime world, and people's tastes change things considerably.

Dunning: To someone like you who saw so much activity on the Bay, does it seem real quiet out there now?

O'Hara: It certainly does. I take a walk up on the hill pretty near every day and look it over and check them out, and make sure they're doing things right out there. I notice that in particular. It's so seldom you see anything now. I worked seven years on the inland fleet for the Standard Oil Company during the war years and shortly after the war years, and then I went back to the city office again. I look back, and there was always something going on. There were boats all over the place. Now you very seldom see a freighter going up the Bay.

Dunning: Wasn't the *Komoku* one of the last ones?

O'Hara: Well, it is the last one. It is the last boat left, that type of boat, in the Bay. There's oil barges around. That's about all that's left. But Matson ships used to go up the Bay. The Matson ships have a little sugar from Honolulu. Several times a week you would see a Matson ship going up. They get the sugar some way, but I really don't know how they get it now. Matson had this all the time. There were big ships going up. They're not the passenger ships, but the freighters they had.

Now Matson has gone to containers, just like American President Line. American President Line used to be the old Dollar Steamship Company, and operated around the world on a schedule, every two weeks around the world, every other week to the Philippine Islands, back to San Francisco again. Now, they carry passengers, but very few. Those container ships are limited to about twelve passengers now. But they're going to containers. They too have moved out of San Francisco, as Matson has, too. They're all over in Oakland now. It's just a changing time. You just have to get used to it, that's all.

Dunning: This brings us to a more current area. I won't really get into it too much today. What do you see in the future for the waterfront in Richmond?

O'Hara: I don't know. I wonder about that myself. I'm not connected with it politically in any way, shape, or form, but it would seem to me that when they built the present container terminal, that they would have built it to handle two ships. Now all it can handle is one ship in there, and should something happen to that ship, or if it had some delay, and another ship wanted to berth, consequently the other ship would have to go to anchor or wait. Time, now, is of the essence with these things. They're like anything else.

Dunning: There must be a very quick turnaround.

O'Hara: That's right. It's a quick turnaround. About sixteen hours or so is the turnaround for these ships now. If they have a delay, those are extremely costly. Most all these ships now do not fly the U.S. flag, unfortunately, so consequently their wages are not comparative to U.S. wages. Most have a Liberian flag, with a crew that could be just about anything. Koreans, I understand are getting in them. They have Filipino crews. They have Italian crews. But, unfortunately, no U.S. crews.

The Matson Company and American President Lines, and I guess, U.S. Lines, are probably the only American flag ships out of San Francisco.

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Observations on Richmond's Container Terminal

[Begin Tape 2, Side A]##

Dunning: During our last session you were tracing the Richmond waterfront and some of its operations. We ended up down by the container port. You said that you really didn't think it was an adequate design in terms of getting the cargo boats in there because there was only docking facility for one, and the turnaround was then too slow. I wondered if you had anything more to say about that.

O'Hara: Nothing other than just as I said before. But I'm not an authority on containers, that's for sure, because I spent thirty-nine years of my working life in the marine industry of the Standard Oil Company, transporting petroleum. Consequently, my experience with containers is very limited.

But just my general observation, and I'm quite sure the observation of other people that have been in the business, can see that there's only one berthing facility there, one berth. The container terminals are basically a quick turnaround operation, approximately twelve, fourteen, sixteen hours. With just one vessel there, should something happen, a delay happen in the unloading, or a mechanical malfunction aboard the ship, would cause a delay. The other ship would be wanting the berth and would be consequently delayed. As a result, it's an extreme expense on people in port delays.

Dunning: What do you see in the future for the port?

O'Hara: Unfortunately, there doesn't seem to be any enthusiasm for developing the port. I think Richmond is an excellent place because of the rail facilities and the highway facility. Also, if some of this cargo has to be transshipped, it can be transferred off onto a smaller boat and taken elsewhere up the Sacramento or San Joaquin Rivers.

San Francisco, as such, is not a container port, as you can see, whereas the competition for Richmond would be in places like Oakland, which is the number one container port in the Bay now. Big companies have all moved there; American President Line, Matson Line. Sundry other ones are in there now. They realize that's the good spot.

I would say Richmond seems to me would be a good place, because it could be developed. However, it will cost money, and the big problem is where is the money going to come from. But I do think ultimately, ten, twenty years from now, it could be developed into a good container port.

Dunning: Last year I read that the Port of Oakland had a proposal to take over the Richmond port, and the City turned it down.

O'Hara: I remember reading about that too, but I'm not too conversant in that. I really haven't followed that facet. I think probably the reason being that they wanted to have it all under one roof, so to speak. The ship would have to make two shifts. It would have to shift from Richmond to discharge part of the cargo, and shift to Oakland and discharge the other part of the cargo.

If you had a place like Richmond where you could develop other berths along in the same line where the present single berth is, there's unlimited space for storing containers.

Port of Oakland

Dunning: It seems like Oakland has been doing something right, because their business has been going up steadily.

O'Hara: There again, you see, geographically Oakland is an excellent spot because it has quick access to rail and to the freeway.

That's why I think Richmond has the same potential to be developed, if they're going to be developing, and attract some of the big companies. I mentioned prior, Oakland has attracted the American President Line, which is the old Dollar Line, which has been in San Francisco since the turn of the century. They vacated there and moved to Oakland. The Matson Line and other

old companies that had been in San Francisco since the turn of the century, they too have vacated San Francisco and moved their offices and all the facilities to Oakland.

I think they realize that's the way to do it. Oakland has lots of room, a lot of flat room to park these containers. If you ever see an aerial view of a container dock, you can see what they want is lots of flat land, not like San Francisco waterfront where they just have a single warehouse and the cargo is all contained in that one warehouse. A container is a different kind of operation all together.

Dunning: Since you were tracing the waterfront, are there any other areas beyond the container terminal area that you would like to talk about?

O'Hara: I don't think I have anything else in mind.

Early World War II Shipbuilding in Richmond

Dunning: That gets me into the war era. I wanted to ask you about that. In 1940, the Todd-California Shipbuilding Corporation contracted with Britain to build thirty ships in Richmond. Was that really the beginning of the major change?

O'Hara: Yes. That was the beginning of the major change, I would say, not only in the Richmond waterfront, but in Richmond itself. Those thirty ships were what was known as the Venture class ships, and they were built for the British government. They were built in the area about where the present sugar dock is now. They

had the same type of hull as the Liberty ship, except there was a little different configuration in the construction of the engine room in them. They were, too, a very good ship.

That was the start of the shipyards in Richmond. I'm not too familiar as to when the other ones followed. They followed right directly behind. I believe it was 1940 when they started to build the first ones.

Dunning: When they started building those first British ships?

O'Hara: Yes, the Venture class.

Dunning: I have a question about that. I'm wondering who worked in building those ships. Did they start recruitment at that point from outside the area, or did local people work in the shipyards?

O'Hara: To the best of my knowledge, it was a case of nationwide recruitment in the shipyards. They got all the local people at first. It was amazing to me how they trained them. They had people who became welders, and riveters, and you name it, that hadn't had any of that type of skill or training before. They suddenly just seemed to come out of nowhere, and they did an excellent job. They had the money to set up training schools for them, and they recruited them from all over the United States.

Dunning: For that first batch? For the thirty Ventures?

O'Hara: I'm quite sure that that applied to the first ones, because they wouldn't have had the facility to do it with just the local people.

Richmond, a Boom Town

Dunning: What was the response of the local residents? Richmond was a small town of a little over twenty thousand. Did you have any anticipation that it was going to boom the way it did during the war?

O'Hara: No, I don't think they did. I think the people who specialized in that type of thing, and government people in Washington D.C., they realized that the war was inevitable probably, and this was just a forerunner of this. When the war did start, then they started all the other yards. They just brought people in from every place all over the United States. A lot of them are still here, people who had worked in the shipyards over the years, in all different skills and crafts.

Dunning: When did you first actually see the changes? There was one aerial view I'm thinking of, a picture taken from Point Richmond prior to the war, and there was practically nothing on the horizon. Then there was a photograph taken a year later, and there were the docks, the shipways, and rows of war housing.

O'Hara: Yes. The drydocks seemed to spring right out of the earth. You could hear the piledrivers going twenty-four hours a day. Then came the housing.

War Housing

O'Hara: Of course, they had to have housing for these people. That encompassed a big area which I would say was bordered by Garrard Boulevard and Cutting Boulevard,

and possibly First Street in Richmond. In that triangular section they just had all sorts of war housing. I suppose now, Atchison Village is probably the only survivor that I know of that was built during that time of the war. On the South Side, too, there was a lot of it down in there, which is south of Cutting.

A lot of them were double decked, big, what now-a-days would be called a condominium. Each individual one looked like a motel in itself. They had to have something for the people there. They didn't have enough. Everybody that had a spare room or apartment rented them, or even people slept in garages and show houses, and everything else, to have a place to sleep. They managed to survive.

Dunning: What was the reaction of longtime Richmond residents to this huge influx?

O'Hara: They weren't against it. There was no controversy with them. They realized, when the war started on December 7, 1941, that it was everybody's responsibility and duty to help some way or another.

A lot of people had two jobs. A lot of people would work a day job in some company, and then they would pick up a job from four to twelve someplace else, maybe in the shipyard. I know several people who worked two jobs.

Personal Career During World War II: Standard Oil Company

Dunning: How did the war years change your life and that of your family?

O'Hara: It had no particular effect on me, other than I was working for the Standard Oil Company in San Francisco in the marine department, and I had had prior vessel experience, so I tried for the navy. I was to be accepted as an ensign in the navy, but they discovered I had a heart murmur and they rejected me.

Consequently I had a license for inland waters and a pilot license for San Francisco Bay, so I transferred to the marine vessels for the Standard Oil Company, and I spent the next seven years with them in what was known as the Bay Fleet of the Standard Oil Company. I was mate and pilot on one of the tugs when we docked, and on dock, ships pushed barges up the Sacramento and San Joaquin Rivers, Redwood City, Oakland Estuary, and the San Francisco waterfront. You name it, I was there.

Dunning: Being one that loved the water, were you happier on the water than in the office?

O'Hara: Not in particular. I had gone to college as I mentioned prior, and I had the four years of college training. I figured that an office was where the better facet of my life would be. I was particularly interested in something of an administrative job. Consequently, after the war that's what I got, in the marine personnel office of Standard Oil Company at 225 Bush Street in San Francisco.

I was a personnel representative. I was involved in the hiring of the vessels. I retired from that same position on July 1, 1976. I feel that I did the right thing. If I were to start all over again, I would have done the same thing all over again.

Richmond's Housing Crisis, 1940s

Dunning: Did your mother ever consider taking in boarders, or did some of your neighbors?

O'Hara: My mother wasn't alive at the time. It was just my sister and myself occupying this house. We didn't consider that, but other people did in the area. Friends of ours rented out spare rooms they had.

Dunning: I've heard some stories about people arriving from the Midwest, and there not being enough housing, and they would just set up their trailer on a vacant lot, or in a trailer park on San Pablo Avenue. What was that like?

O'Hara: I'm not too familiar out in that area, to be truthful with you, and I couldn't speak with any authority on it, but the whole thing was a very confusing and complex thing. There were people everyplace. The town went from, as you mentioned before, twenty thousand, to over a hundred thousand.

These poor people, I don't know what they told them when they recruited them, but they just brought them in in trainloads and just dumped them out at the Sixteenth Street depot, or someplace in Oakland. They had people to meet them, of course, but as far as the housing, that really was a problem.

I thought they did a good job. When you stop to figure, to assemble all this material, and to get the people that would have the expertise to build the houses for these huge big housing units, I thought they did a marvelous job. Housing suddenly seemed to come right up out of the ground.

Now, if you look around, you can't even find them. They tore them all down and sold them to people. People packed the lumber off and built homes for themselves elsewhere.

I thought they did a good job on the housing. Of course, I wasn't affected by it, so it looked all right for me, but I'm sure people who had to sleep in the show house at Ninth and Macdonald for the daytime without a place to call home felt otherwise.

Dunning: I'm not familiar with that. What is the show house? The movie theater?

O'Hara: The movie theater, yes. They had the movie theater. It went for about twenty-four hours a day. A lot of these people didn't have a place to stay. They had about three movie theaters, as I recall, along Macdonald Avenue. A lot of people--I've heard, I should say. I've never actually seen it happen, but I heard stories of people. They didn't have a place to stay and just couldn't find a place to stay. They would go sit in the show house and sleep in a seat all day. The management didn't particularly care. Of course, the show house wasn't flooded with that type of patron, but they were there anyway.

Dunning: I've heard the expression "hot bed," where three people on three different shifts would share one bed. One would be getting out of the bed and the next getting in.

O'Hara: I've heard of that too, but I really don't know of anybody. I think that was kind of a far-fetched story. I've heard of it, but I don't know anyone in particular having it happen to them.

Wartime Strain On City Services

Dunning: What about services for all the people coming in? It seems like it would have been a huge strain on the school system and the police force and fire department.

O'Hara: Yes, it was. It was a big strain on the school system. They had a double class. Sometimes the teachers had to share the same room with another teacher. In an auditorium they may have two or three classes going in different corners because they really didn't have the school facilities at that time. I guess they felt that the housing was the paramount thing to build, which they did.

As far as the police department, they too were overtaxed, but the housing, in these housing units, they had their own police force. Of course, they worked in conjunction with the Richmond Police Department. I have no recollection of their having a jail of their own. But they had their own problems, lots of problems; fighting and drinking; types of things like that.

Postwar Changes

Dunning: What about the whole racial situation, because Richmond was predominantly white before the war, and then the ethnic composition changed so drastically.

O'Hara: I'm not too familiar with that, to be truthful with you, but they seemed to blend in. To the best of my knowledge there wasn't any problem. I think everybody figured they had a common goal, and that was to win the war. As far as the color of the person's skin, or what

his political affiliations were, it didn't seem to enter into the picture. Everybody was determined to win and they were all in good spirits about it. That's the way things seemed to go.

Dunning: Perhaps some of the problems didn't come out until post war, when there wasn't that economic base; people didn't have a job.

O'Hara: That's true. They ran into a lot of problems then because here you've got a hundred thousand people and some having two jobs. Needless to say, there was no scarcity of jobs during the war. But after that, as soon as these war years ended, the shipyard shut down pronto, and that was the end of that, as did a lot of other companies. There were people dependent on the shipyards. Consequently, there was a lot of shifting around. People left the area. Some went back to where they were recruited from. Many stayed and raised their families and are still here. They seemed to get absorbed into the work force okay. No problem.

Dunning: I talked to one longtime Richmond resident, and she had the idea that after the war everyone would go back to where they came from, and that Richmond would be a small town again. I think she was rather surprised. She said some people did go back, but later they returned with the rest of their family.

O'Hara: That, I understand, is true too. I think a lot of these poor people that were brought out here were picked up in more or less economically depressed areas, and when they came here and had full employment and they were able to have a home and raise their family, I think they realized that this was probably the golden spot and they stayed here, or went back home and brought their family out here.

Richmond as an Historical Place

Dunning: You were mentioning that down around on Railroad Avenue there was a red light district. Was that pre-war years, or during the war years?

O'Hara: No, that was many years pre-war. It was actually way before my time. To me it's just a rumor, you might say.

Dunning: I had heard it before, but I didn't know whether it was right around the founding of the town, or--

O'Hara: To the best of my knowledge, there wasn't anything of that type around. Everybody was too busy during the war years. I believe this was way back in 1920, we'll say, or somewhere in through that area. That's all gone now, too.

Dunning: Do you see Richmond as a historical place?

O'Hara: I do. In California everything is kind of historical when they reach about seventy-five years of age, whereas in comparison with the things on the East Coast or foreign countries, things maybe two, four, or six hundred, or a thousand years old become historical. In Richmond it's somewhat odd that after some eighty years it would be historical, but it really is. People accept it, and I do think they should preserve the history of the thing rather than destroy it or tear it down.

Dunning: What do you think are the most important aspects that should be remembered? Anything that really stands out in your mind?

O'Hara: Well, nothing specific. I do think that some of the older buildings. For example, they just tore the Elks Club down in Richmond. I've been a member of the Richmond Lodge of Elks for forty-nine years, and it was sad to see it go because I thought it was a beautiful place.

Dunning: Where was that located?

O'Hara: At the corner of Tenth and Macdonald in Richmond. They decided to redevelop and wanted the property. Then they decided they couldn't do anything with the building because it wasn't earthquake proof and they wouldn't allow anybody to occupy it, so the building was destroyed after being vacant for many, many years. They tore it down here just a few months back. It was sad seeing things like that.

I thought the architecture of the building was good. I think the architecture on the old Wells Fargo Bank on the adjacent corner is nice architecture. That should be preserved. But they don't seem to have any particular rhyme or reason in the development of the downtown area, because everybody seemed to have moved out into the El Sobrante area, so consequently places like Hilltop and places of that type seem to be the place to go.

That happens in many cities though. Others have the same problem. The downtown area in San Francisco is a good example of that. You see the stores now, there's hardly any of the old stores left in San Francisco. There were family owned stores up until a few years back. They've gradually disappeared, and some of those stores are now vacant.

Dunning: Do you think that's progress or poor planning?

O'Hara: I don't know. Neither, I don't think. I think it's just the changing times. People like to get out away from the city. They don't like to come into the city if they've worked there all week. For example now, people who live out in the El Sobrante area, or Pinole area, they don't like to get dressed up on Saturday and come downtown to say mid-town Richmond, to do their shopping, as Richmond used to have all the nice stores along Macdonald Avenue.

Now they can just go to--I just cite Hilltop as an example. They put on their old slacks and a tee-shirt or something and go to Hilltop, and pile the kids in the car. They're there in five minutes and you don't have that big problem. That holds, I'm quite sure, in cities like San Francisco. People don't like to come downtown anymore as they used to go downtown on Saturdays and do their shopping. They now have the big shopping areas in Marin County they can go to, just a mile from their home, or less than that probably.

Dunning: The malls?

O'Hara: Yes.

Dunning: In speaking to some people that always used downtown Richmond to do all their shopping, they don't go out to Hilltop Mall, because they feel it's mostly clothing stores, plus you have to get in your car and get on the freeway, and it isn't as convenient.

O'Hara: That's true. No, it's not for people that reside in Point Richmond, that's for sure, or downtown Richmond. No, to go to Hilltop to me is a laborious job. I find it easier to go to Marin County over the San Rafael Bridge.

Dunning: That's what you usually do?

O'Hara: That's right. I used to commute on the Richmond-San Rafael Bridge all the time. The last couple of years I tapered off going over there, but it is always a nice ride.

Dunning: Which shopping area would you use in Marin County?

O'Hara: Northgate. There again is a good example of a place. They have everything there. Anything you want, you can find it there. They have a big Emporium store, and they have a big Sears-Roebuck store, and they have good eating facilities also in the area.

Effects of Redevelopment in Downtown Richmond##

Dunning: We were talking about the disappearance of downtown.

O'Hara: Yes. The disappearance of downtown Richomond, which is no longer in existence. There isn't a downtown. It's embarrassing when you have friends come from someplace else. I had friends from Santa Rosa here a while back. I took them on a little ride to show them the town.

They said, "Is this the downtown area?"

I said, "This is it, right here." It's just gone. Period.

Dunning: Whose decision was it to actually tear down the downtown buildings? It happened in the sixties, and I know there was a redevelopment craze at that point, and it was sort of the thing to do.

O'Hara: That's right. I'm not politically minded, so consequently I don't follow the politics in the city, but it was this redevelopment. I guess that's the one

they lay the blame on. The thing never seemed to ever get off the ground. They're the ones to tear the buldings down, but there has been no replacement for the buildings. It would seem to me the prudent thing to do would be, if they were going to tear the buildings down, would be to have a replacement in mind for them. They just went willy-nilly down the street and tore all the buildings down.

The buildings I think that probably should be torn down would be on the lower end of Macdonald Avenue, where they're falling down. Some of the buildings they tore down just drove the merchants out of business in the area from, I'm speaking say maybe, Sixth Street at the very lowest, all the way up to maybe Sixteenth Street in Richmond. There are a lot of businesses there. Merchants had been there for generations. But all of the sudden, redevelopment came in and wanted the land, and as a result, you see the results.

Dunning: It's like a war zone.

O'Hara: Devastating. It looks like a disaster area.

Dunning: Was there any protest from Richmond residents?

O'Hara: As I said, I'm not politically minded. I didn't follow any of the meetings or anything, and I really don't know. I'm quite sure there were protests, but that was the popular thing to do. Redevelopment had a magical name. I think the thing was to tear buildings down. I think people were sort of disillusioned in the whole thing. I think they had ideas of grandeur. It was going to be a mall with all the shopping stores in there, and nice places to eat. But it never did get off the ground.

Dunning: In some ways it would have made more sense, at least for Richmond residents, to have a Hilltop version downtown.

O'Hara: That's right. They could have, like Santa Rosa is a good example, something of that type. But Richmond never seemed to get organized, or the thing never took place. You see the results of it.

Dunning: The thing that strikes me in Richmond is that there is no center. In the Point, there are a few stores, but there's no core of the city.

O'Hara: That's right. There's no downtown core, that's for sure. If you want to see where people have gone, I think just drive out through El Sobrante on the San Pablo Dam Road. Even the town of San Pablo amazes me. They seem to be doing quite well on their housing and their downtown area. If you notice, there's a lot of buildings in good places.

Brickyard Landing

O'Hara: But I wonder what's going to happen to Point Richmond when Brickyard Landing is completed and all occupied. I don't know. They think they're going to change the road. They're going to change the entrance into Brickyard Landing, but that's not going to apply to everybody. These people are going to want to come into the town of Point Richmond and get groceries and shop on their way home from work at night, and things like that. I can imagine there will be a lot of confusion. I believe there's something like four hundred units down there. That's going to be a lot of people.

Dunning: If not more than that. Have you been down there recently?

O'Hara: Yes. About once a week I take a ride out there and look it over. It's amazing.

Dunning: It seems to be erupting out of the hillside.

O'Hara: That's right.

Dunning: Will the tunnel be the only access, or are they going to try to build another road?

O'Hara: The way I understand it, they're going to have another road. In fact, they're working on it now. If you come down Cutting Boulevard, at the signal at Canal and Cutting, then you would turn left and go off towards where the old shipyard area used to be, and join this road that will take you out to the south end of the hill, and that will put you into Brickyard Cove. That's what they think people will use rather than the tunnel.

Dunning: We'll see.

O'Hara: That's what I was thinking, the same thing. My way of looking at it, it would be easier to use the tunnel, but there's people smarter than I am that figured it out. They make a living out of it, so I suppose that's the way it will probably go. At least they hope, anyway.

Dunning: It seems like that is going to bring about quite a few changes, because the people who are going to be moving into Brickyard Cove, I imagine they're accustomed to having a lot of conveniences and accessability of shopping stores. I just wonder what's in store for the future.

O'Hara: That's what I wonder myself. These people, they say they're professional people, and only one or two people in the family, so to speak, so anything they get they wouldn't be probably buying it here.

Point Richmond, an Historical District

O'Hara: That, I think, is the philosophy behind the thing. But I do think if they had something to attract them here--but for the life of me, I can't think of how they could attract them to anything here or downtown, or anyplace else, although I like it. Our Point Richmond area here is convenient for me, but lots of things they don't have.

For example, somebody asked me a while back, called me, and said, "What do you think Point Richmond could have?"

I said, "They both should start with a 'B.' One should be a bakery and one should be a bank, because we have neither of the two."

Dunning: In some ways I'm glad there's not a bakery, but I really wonder why there isn't one here.

O'Hara: I wanted the same thing too, because I think we all have a little sweet tooth, but the nearest bakery and the only bakery in Richmond that I know of, at Twenty-third Street, right off of Macdonald.

Dunning: Was there a bakery in the Point?

O'Hara: Oh, yes. There used to be one down in the building, I don't know what's in there now. There's been so many people in that building. There's been a bar in it and everything else. It used to be called the Mariner's Bar at one time. Now it's no longer a bar. It's right across the street from the post office. It's a brown painted building next to the Masquers Theater. It would be to the east side of the Masquers Theater. It used to be a bakery. A family named Martin had it. That was a bakery for years and years.

Dunning: I think someone coming in would be very successful.

O'Hara: I think they would. I don't think they're going to retire within a few years after starting up a bakery. But I do think that there would be people buying.

Dunning: Particularly on a Sunday morning when everything is closed. That would be nice.

O'Hara: Yes.

Dunning: The downtown Point Richmond is a designated historical district?

O'Hara: It is now as I understand it, yes.

Dunning: Do you know what that means?

O'Hara: I think what it actually means--there again I'm not too conversant in the thing--I think what it actually means is that you can't alter the front of the building. In other words, you couldn't tear off the front of a building and put a whole modernistic glass front on it. Let's say that for example. It has to conform to its present profile. That's the way I understand the thing.

I notice they're fixing over an old building down here where Kenny's home used to be. James Kenny is a retired supervisor who was born and raised there. They're fixing over that old building, but it appears to be conforming to the face of the old building.

Dunning: The facade is the same?

O'Hara: Yes, the same.

Dunning: Is that the victorian building across from the Hotel Mac?

O'Hara: Yes. It had plywood across the front of it. It's that first building. There's a vacant lot. The vacant lot would be on the west side of that building. Then the building on the corner is the Spot Bar. I'm not familiar with these bars, but the Spot is on the corner. In that building, I think that's one of those that's just been really fixed over, but there it has to conform, I think, to this ruling they have regarding old buildings.

Dunning: Are there rules about what goes on behind this facade? They keep the facade the same, but are there regulations as to the kind of businesses that are in there?

O'Hara: I really don't know, but I'm sure the City of Richmond has its regulations. In other words, you can't have a bar every hundred feet or something like that. I'm sure there's some rule or regulation on that. But I think if it's a legitimate business, I'm quite sure there's no problem.

Dunning: What about building. I notice there are a few lots right in the center of Point Richmond. Do you know if there are restrictions about that?

O'Hara: I don't think so. You couldn't build a home, of course, because it's a business area. I think people are just a little apprehensive about investing the money because construction is extremely expensive, and as I mentioned a little while ago, if you want to see where Richmond has gone, just go out around El Sobrante or out in that area. You'll see all the building along the old San Pablo Dam Road and places like that,

doctors' offices and different kinds of businesses that it would be nice if we had them in Point Richmond, but it's just not conducive to that because all the population has moved to El Sobrante. They'll build where the people are.

Dunning: Do you think that part of the Richmond population has moved to El Sobrante?

O'Hara: Oh, yes. That's what it is. It's probably descendents now of the people we were talking about that came here during the shipyard years. Those people now are passed on, or they're not building homes, I don't think. These are the children that have moved out there. They had to expand someplace, and there wasn't much place around Richmond where they would care to go, so they just went out there. It's a nice area.

Dunning: Do you mean the blacks, or the people from Oklahoma and Arkansas; the Midwesterners that came?

O'Hara: I would say all those people, the Midwesterners, that were recruited during the war years, plus those from the Southern states, have now migrated into that area.

Dunning: You always hear a lot about "Okies," or that word brings images to your mind. Could you describe what an "Okie" is to you?

O'Hara: I prefer not to get involved. I feel very sorry for those poor people. I've never been to Oklahoma and consequently I know nothing about it, but I will admit that a lot of the poor people, when they arrived here, they were just overwhelmed with the place. I'd rather not get involved in it.

Dunning: There was a professor at Cal who was doing a project on the "Okie" subculture in California, so he was studying people who came during the Dustbowl, and then people

who came afterwards. He wanted me to ask people what they thought of when they heard the word "Okie." One thing I've noticed, that when I ask people that question, everybody laughs first, or they have a big smile.

O'Hara: Actually, I myself had little or no experience with them. I would say I've heard stories or tales. People like merchants, and people at banks would be more conversant than I about them.

Richmond's Future

Dunning: Do you have any ideas about where Richmond is going?

O'Hara: I wonder that myself many times, looking at it. I don't think Richmond is going anyplace. It seems to be stuck on dead center. They can't build much. All the lots are taken. All the industrial areas seem to be pretty well occupied. I would think that if Richmond had, as I mentioned before, a downtown area. As I mentioned about the Elks Club, what happened to them is a good example of things disappearing.

The Elks Club has moved out into the El Sobrante area. They're in an old building out there, which was originally a grocery store. I can't visualize them ever coming downtown and building a big clubhouse in downtown Richmond.

I really shouldn't say that I don't have any hope for Richmond. I would like to see Richmond prosper and develop, but for the life of me I can't see how or where it's going to do that. That's just my observation.

As I said, I'm not politically minded. I don't follow the council meetings and things like that, and hear what these people have to say, but I'm sure lots of people would be more conversant than I am on the thing. I can't see where it's going to go, or how they're going to develop, or how anybody would want to invest any money in the downtown area. The builders and investors, they want to get their money back out of it. They're not building these things for fun, that's for sure.

Dunning: Last week in the paper I was reading where a Japanese firm has expressed interest in making some investments downtown. That would be a whole other shift.

O'Hara: I read that too, but I'll believe it when I see it. They're not throwing their money away either. I think they had other places they were talking about, too. I think if they get an area where, like down the San Francisco peninsula, either side of the peninsula, west side or east side of the bay going down that way, you can see the young people, and it's more of an affluent area, that is where they would want to develop.

These developers--I'm talking about these stores--they aren't sentimentalists. They want to get their money back, and they're going to build a building where they're going to get their money back. I don't think downtown Richmond is one of those places.

I can't go much longer.

Dunning: Yes, I know you have lunch. We'll close for today. If at a later time anything comes to your mind that you think should be recorded about Richmond, we can maybe set up a real short session.

O'Hara: Fine. That would be fine.

Dunning: I always keep an extra tape for people, so if even a month from now something comes to your mind that we didn't discuss, we can give you a buzz and I can come back over. That would be great.

O'Hara: Very good. Fine. You give me a buzz.

Dunning: Thank you.

Transcriber and Final Typist: David Pollock

APPENDICES

CHEVRON SHIPPING COMPANY
LIST OF "FIRSTS"

1895	Took delivery of the first true tanker to be built on the West Coast and to ply West Coast trades, the GEORGE LOOMIS, a 6,500 barrel, (about 900 DWT) vessel.
1898	Initiated petroleum product deliveries by tanker to Alaska using a sternwheel river steamer, the OIL CITY. To the present time, Chevron remains the only company which routinely supplies many remote areas in Alaska with tanker-delivered petroleum products.
1916	Completed the longest seagoing tow on record made by S/S RICHMOND, a 65,600 barrel tanker (about 9,100 DWT), towing Sea Barge S.O.CO. NO. 95 around the world. The barge was initially towed from San Francisco Bay to London and after five trips across the Atlantic, completed its round-the-world tow logging a total of 75,000 miles.
1925	Took delivery of the M/S HAWAIIAN STANDARD, the first tanker designed primarily for inter-island trading and delivery of petroleum products in the Hawaiian Islands.
1928	Patented the first combination flue-gas inerting and venting system for use on tankers to protect cargo tanks against accidental ignition.
1929-1930	Pioneered the development of the multi-buoy vessel mooring system and related equipment for loading and discharging tankers offshore.
1930	H.M. STOREY loaded out the first cargo of crude from Estero.
Early 1930's	Pioneered the development of automatic tape gauges for use aboard tankers.
1933	Refitted and used the 39,700 barrel tanker (about 5,500 DWT) S/S EL SEGUNDO to transport drilling and other equipment for use in drilling the first well on Bahrain Island which led to the discovery of oil there and eventually in Saudi Arabia
1934	Loaded the first cargo of Bahrain crude aboard the W. S. RHEEM for delivery to Japan.
Mid-1930's	Participated in developing with the U.S. Coast Guard the first set of tanker regulations covering vessel design, construction and operation standards.
1939	Loaded aboard the D. G. SCOFIELD, an 81,000 barrel tanker (about 11,300 DWT) for delivery to the U.S., the first full cargo of crude oil shipped from Saudi Arabia.

1946 Participated in testing successfully the first protective coatings to be used in vessel cargo tanks.

1946 Took delivery of the 12,900 DWT R. G. FOLLIS, later renamed the UTAH STANDARD, the first U.S. merchant ship, to have radar built into the vessel.

1960 Loaded aboard the 14,300 DWT W. H. BERG at Nikiski the first full cargo of crude oil ever shipped from Alaska.

1974 Lightered the first VLCC offshore California - the 216,000 DWT E. HORNSBY WASSON.

1975 Placed into operation the 35,000 DWT CHEVRON OREGON, the first industrial gas turbine powered tanker ever built in the U.S.

May 25, 1978

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Judith K. Dunning

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Previous oral history projects: Three Generations of Italian Women in Boston's North End; World War I and II shipyard workers at the Charlestown Navy Yard, Boston; and Textile mill workers in Lowell, Massachusetts.

Photography exhibitions: "Lowell: A Community of Workers," Lowell, MA 1981-1984 (travelling).
Fishermen by Trade: On San Francisco Bay with the Ghio Brothers" Richmond Museum, 1988.

Play: "Boomtown" based on the oral histories of shipyard workers, produced by San Francisco Tale Spinners Theater, 1989.

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Currently adapting Richmond community oral histories into large print books for California adult literacy programs.

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